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Ladies and Gentlemen:

You have asked whether foreclosure of its assessment lien by a Nevada common interest association extinguishes a first security interest and other junior interests.

It is my opinion that foreclosure by an association extinguishes the first security interest and all other subordinate interests if the foreclosure otherwise complies with the requirements of Nevada law.

As discussed more below, the Nevada statute is based on and incorporates, with variations not relevant to my opinion, the provisions of the Uniform Common Interest Ownership Act ("UCIOA"). My long experience in the writing of UCIOA and its predecessor laws gives me a unique perspective into the meaning and intent of Nevada's Uniform Common-Interest Ownership Act ("NUCIOA").

UCIOA and NUCIOA clearly contemplate that foreclosure by an association extinguishes a first security interest.

My Experience and Background

ULC Commissioner. The Uniform Law Commission (also known as the National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws) was established in 1892. It provides States with non-partisan, well-conceived and well-drafted legislation that brings clarity and stability to critical areas of state statutory law.

I have served as a Uniform Law Commissioner without interruption since 1976. I have been involved, almost continuously, in the drafting of substantially all of the uniform and model laws relating to condominiums, planned communities, cooperatives, time-shares, partition of real estate, land security interests and nonjudicial foreclosure.

My initial involvement in common interest ownership law was as a member of the ULC's 1976 review committee on the Uniform Condominium Act. Thereafter, I was a member of the drafting committees that produced the 1980 Uniform Planned Community Act and the 1982 Uniform Common Interest Ownership Act. I chaired the committee that amended the Uniform Common Interest Ownership Act in 1994.

I chaired the drafting committee that produced both the 2008 amended Uniform Common Interest Ownership Act and the Uniform Common Interest Owners Bill of Rights Act.

Educator. I taught a course on real estate transactions for 18 years as an adjunct professor at Vermont Law School, with an emphasis on common interest ownership law.

I've been on the faculty of numerous courses and classes for lawyers and others involved in real estate, including chairing the American Law Institute-American Bar Association's courses on condominium, planned community and mixed use projects as well as serving on the faculty of the ALI-ABA course on resort real estate. In those classes, I emphasize the benefits and burdens of the Uniform laws for developers, lenders, merchant builders, unit purchasers and sellers, associations and managers.

I've addressed legislative committees in a number of States on the subject of the real property Uniform Laws as well as been an invited speaker at symposia and similar events.

Peer Organizations. I've chaired the Common Interest Committee of the American College

of Real Estate Lawyers and the Condominium and Planned Community Committee of the ABA Real Property Section.

I chaired, until recently, the Joint Editorial Board on Real Property, jointly sponsored by the American College of Real Estate Lawyers, the ABA Real Property Section, the Uniform Law Conference, the Community Association Institute, the American College of Mortgage Attorneys and the American Land Title Association.

UCIOA and NUCIOA

Our goals in promulgating the 1982 UCIOA[1] were many, but we believe that we achieved at least two of them:

First, we consolidated, into a single statute, the law applicable to the creation and termination of the condominium, planned community and real estate cooperative forms of real estate;[2] the operation of common interest community associations; and protections of consumers in purchases from the declarant and in resale transactions.

Second, we eliminated substantially all of the variations applicable to common interest communities attributable solely to the legal form of the community and, as to the remainder, we "harmonized" the differences.

1982 UCIOA is divided into five parts:

- Article 1 contains definitions and general provisions.
- Article 2 provides for the creation, alteration and termination of common interest

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[1] The ULC has subsequently amended UCIOA: First, in 1994, to address minor changes and, second, in 2008, to significantly expand Part 3 to expand governance rights for owners and increased transparency of board actions, as well as other changes throughout the rest of the Act. Those changes do not affect my opinions.

[2] The important distinctions among these three forms of ownership is who owns what: In a condominium, unit owners own their units individually and, together, they own the common elements, which their association (in which they are mandatory members) manages; in a planned community, unit owners own their own units but their association (in which they are mandatory members) owns the common elements; and in a real estate cooperative, the association owns both the units and common elements but owners, by virtue of their membership in the association, have exclusive rights to particular units.

In each, the association has a lien to enforce its assessment authority.

communities.

- Article 3 concerns the administration of the community association.

- Article 4 deals with consumer protection for purchasers.

- Article 5 is an optional Article which establishes an administrative agency to supervise a developer's activities.

Nevada enacted NUCIOA in 1991. At that time, Nevada adopted, without variations not relevant to my opinion, 1982 UCIOA's Section 3-116. The Nevada version is NRS 116.3116.

The ULC proudly proclaims that roughly half the States have enacted one or more of the Uniform Condominium Act, the Uniform Planned Community Act or one of the iterations of UCIOA.[3]

Priorities

The first of the uniform laws addressing common interest communities was the Uniform Condominium Act. It was initially designed to deal with a wide range of issues including flexibility for developers, abuses by developers, the need to protect developer lenders after developer failure, separating title documentation from purchaser disclosure, appropriate disclosure for purchasers, and the powers and responsibilities of the association.[4]

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[3] UCIOA: Alaska, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Minnesota, Nevada, West Virginia, Vermont.

Uniform Condominium Act: Alabama, Arizona, Louisiana, Maine, Missouri, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Texas, Virginia, Washington.

Uniform Planned Community Act: Pennsylvania.

Uniform Common Interest Owner Bill of Rights: Kansas.

[4] Although nothing in the Uniform Condominium Act prohibited a "horizontal" condominium, the presumption that guided its drafting was that a condominium would be vertical, as with mid- and high-rise buildings.

The Uniform Planned Community Act was initially designed to deal with the "multi-unit residential 'planned community' served by common area facilities owned and operated by a homeowner association." Although nothing in the Uniform Planned Community Act prohibited a "vertical" planned community, the presumption that guided its drafting was that a planned community would be horizontal, as with traditional subdivisions in which the association owned common land.

Because the role of an association is critical to the success or failure of the great majority of common interest communities, we devoted a significant amount of time to empowering the association. One of the most important conclusions that we reached addressed the need of the association to be properly funded.

Most common interest associations raise funds for their operations by assessing their members; some associations have amenities or other assets that generate income from third parties, but they are few in comparison. Similarly, most associations begin their budgeting process by identifying their expenses and then match up total expenses with assessment revenue. The consequence of this process is that if a single unit owner fails to pay her assessment obligations, the association is forced to cut back its expenses in the same amount – to the end that not all budgeted services can be provided. For that reason, the association was given a statutory lien against the unit owner's unit; it was believed that the mere existence of the lien would be sufficient leverage to ensure the association's ability to collect and, if not so, then the association was given the statutory authority to foreclose its lien in the same manner as a security interest.

However, if the association's only realistic remedy is foreclosure,[5] the association's lien – for assessments arising after the unit owner's mortgage was recorded in the office of the recorder – would ordinarily be junior to the first security interest. As a result, a foreclosing association would take subject to the first security interest – not a practical result – or, worse, be foreclosed by the holder of the first security interest.

It was Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac that proposed a solution that would protect the association and the interests of the holder of the first security interest: Give the association a limited priority ahead of the first security interest – UCIOA chose an amount equal to six months of assessments under the annual budget; the Nevada version is nine months. As explained in the Official Comments,

> as to prior first security interests the association's lien does have priority for six months' assessments based on the periodic budget. A significant departure from existing practice, the six months' priority for the assessment lien strikes an equitable balance between the need to

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When we were comparing Uniform Condominium Act and the Uniform Planned Community Act during the 1982 UCIOA drafting process, we immediately recognized that the condominium and planned community forms of ownership were interchangeable, so that a condominium could be created as a traditional "homes association" neighborhood and a planned community could be a high-rise building. With that recognition, we sought to eliminate variations.

[5] That would be true if pursuit of a money judgment against the unit owner would be futile.

> enforce collection of unpaid assessments and the obvious necessity for protecting the priority of the security interests of lenders.

First embodied in the 1976 Uniform Condominium Act, this priority principle has become the law not only in States that enacted one or more of the Uniform laws and in a half dozen other States by specific legislation.

A lender faced with foreclosure by the association could be expected to protect its collateral by paying off the six month priority amount. And it could do so without advancing its own funds by requiring its borrowers to escrow for association assessments in the same manner as lenders require escrow for property taxes and casualty insurance.[6]

Foreclosure

The priority treatment of the association's lien is not limited to a first claim to proceeds from the foreclosure sale (up to an amount of unpaid assessments, fee, charges, late charges, fines and interest not exceeding six months of assessments determined by the periodic budget). It also puts the association ahead of the first security interest – and that means that foreclosure by the association extinguishes the first security interest and all junior interests.[7]

That result naturally follows from the customary rule regarding priority of interests in real estate.[8] A foreclosure sale of the association's lien is governed by the same principles generally applicable to lien foreclosure sales, so that foreclosure of a lien entitled to priority extinguishes that lien and all subordinate liens. The liens attach to the proceeds of the sale and are paid out accordingly.

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[6] Of course, back in 1976, there were many fewer foreclosures and only a few of them required more than six months from commencement to completion. Even in a judicial foreclosure jurisdiction, foreclosure actions – in the absence of a meritorious defense – would be completed in less than 12 months. Requiring a borrower to escrow six months of association associations was seen as a minor burden.

[7] There is an exception, though very unlikely: If the first security interest is recorded before the declaration, the association's lien would be junior to it.

[8] The Restatement of Property (Mortgages) (1996) states the general rule, in the context of mortgage foreclosure, this way in Section 7.1: "A valid foreclosure of a mortgage terminates all interests in the foreclosed real estate that are junior to the mortgage being foreclosed and whose holders are properly joined or notified under applicable law." By substituting "association lien" for "mortgage," the rule in NUCIOA 116.3116 is clearly understood.

The holder of the first security interest can easily protect its position by paying the six-month priority amount to the association and taking an assignment from the association.

Conclusion

The NUCIOA follows the principles in UCIOA:

- The association enjoys a statutory limited priority ahead of a first security interest similar to the priority given to property taxes and other governmental charges.

- Because of the statutory priority, foreclosure by the association extinguishes the first security interest and all other junior interests.

- The holder of a first security interest can – and should – protect itself against an association foreclosure by requiring that its borrower escrow the full amount of the association's priority and paying it to the association to avoid extinguishment of the security interest.

Sincerely,

Carl H. Lisman

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